

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 ISO-00 PM-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
OES-07 PA-01 ICAE-00 SSO-00 SS-15 COME-00 NASA-01
INRE-00 EPA-01 CEQ-01 /065 W
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O 090521Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5704
INFO COMNAVFACENGCOM ALEXANDRIA VA IMMEDIATE
PACNAVFACENGCOM PEARL HARBOR HI IMMEDIATE
SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
CINCPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI IMMEDIATE
CNO WASHDC IMMEDIATE
CHNAVMAT WASHDC IMMEDIATE
NAVOBSY WASHDC IMMEDIATE
OICC MIDPAC PEARL HARBOR HI IMMEDIATE
ROICC CHRISTCHURCH NZ IMMEDIATE

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (SHOW INFO ADDEES)

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MARR, TSPA, NZ, US
SUBJECT: TRANSIT CIRCLE FACILITY NEW ZEALAND (PROJECT
- P-022); NAVAL OBSERVATORY WASHDC

REF: (A) STATE 51578, (B) WELLINGTON 2503, (C) PACNAV-
FACENGCOM DTG 240011Z MAY 78, (C) COMNAVFACENGCOM
DTG 301531Z MAY 78

SUMMARY: TRANSIT CIRCLE FACILITY SURVEY TEAM IS
MAKING SATISFACTORY PROGRESS ENGAGING NEW ZEALAND
CONSULTANTS FOR FULL SITE SURVEY. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS
AND GNZ OFFICIALS CONCUR THAT A PRESS RELEASE ON
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THE FACILITY BE MADE BY GNZ DURING WEEK OF JUNE 12.
DEPARTMENT'S APPROVAL OF TEXT, TIMING AND MANNER OF
THE RELEASE IS REQUESTED. END SUMMARY.

1. PACNAVFACENGCOM SITE SURVEY TEAM (WARREN JOHNSON
AND ARTHUR WEBER) IS PROCEEDING SATISFACTORILY WITH
SURVEY ARRANGEMENTS. CONTRACTS FOR SITE SURVEY AND

ENGINEERING STUDY PRESENTLY BEING NEGOTIATED AND ARE EXPECTED TO BE SIGNED DURING WEEK OF JUNE 12. SURVEY TEAM WILL PROVIDE ITS OWN FULL REPORT TO ADDRESSEES UPON RETURN TO PEARL HARBOR.

2. FOLLOWING NUMEROUS DISCUSSIONS WITH GNZ OFFICIALS (MFA, MIN OF WORK, LANDS AND SURVEYS, CARTER OBSERVATORY AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ED LATTER, IN WHOSE CONSTITUENCY SITE WILL BE LOCATED), COUNTRY TEAM RECOMMENDS AN IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE, BY GNZ, ANNOUNCING THE DECISION TO LOCATE THE TRANSIT CIRCLE PROJECT IN NEW ZEALAND. PRINCIPAL MOTIVATION OF AN EARLY PRESS RELEASE IS TO ENABLE THE TRANSIT CIRCLE PROGRAM AND ITS NZ SITE SELECTION TO BE DESCRIBED ON OUR OWN TERMS RATHER THAN IN REACTION TO RUMORS OR THE INEVITABLE LEFT-WING CRITICISMS. SURVEY TEAM HAS HAD BROAD CONTACT THIS PAST WEEK IN WELLINGTON AND BLENHEIM PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES. IT SEEMS INEVITABLE THAT THE MEDIA DESCRIPTIONS -- PERHAPS INACCURATE ONES -- WILL APPEAR SOON IN ANY EVENT. THEREFORE, EMBASSY URGES, AND GNZ OFFICIALS AGREE, THAT AN IMMEDIATE PRESS INITIATIVE ON OUR PART IS THE PREFERABLE COURSE.

3. GNZ MINISTER OF SCIENCE, LES GANDAR, HAS TENTATIVELY INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO MAKE PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT. ALTERNATIVE POSSIBILITIES (ALSO WILLING) ARE MP ED LATTER AND CARTER OBSERVATORY'S DR. LEWIS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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(NONE HAS YET SEEN THE SUGGESTED RELEASE.)

4. ACTION REQUESTED: (A) COMMENT, REVISION AND APPROVAL OF FOLLOWING DRAFT PRESS RELEASE TO BE MADE BY GNZ; (B) CONCURRENCE IN TIMING OF RELEASE, I.E., ASAP IN THE WEEK OF JUNE 12; (C) DEPARTMENT'S PREFERENCE AS TO MANNER OF RELEASE.

5. TEXT OF PROPOSED RELEASE FOLLOWS:

"AN AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE HAS BEEN REACHED WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OBSERVATORY FOR ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATIONS AT THE BLACK BIRCH EXPERIMENTAL AREA SOUTHWEST OF BLENHEIM. A TWO-MAN SITE SURVEY TEAM (CIVIL ENGINEER AND ARCHITECT) IS CURRENTLY IN NEW ZEALAND CONDUCTING A SURVEY, ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES NAVAL OBSERVATORY, OF THE PROPOSED BLACK BIRCH SITE AND COORDINATING FUTURE CONSTRUCTION PLANS WITH OFFICIALS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CARTER OBSERVATORY, NEW ZEALAND'S NATIONAL OBSERVATORY.

"THE PROPOSED TEN-YEAR PROGRAM, TO BE CALLED "TRANSIT CIRCLE," IS DESIGNED TO DETERMINE THE POSITIONS AND

PROPER MOTIONS OF SOUTHERN HEMISPHERIC STARS IN ORDER TO UPDATE AND IMPROVE THE ACCURACY OF CELESTIAL POSITIONING AND NAVIGATION IN THE HEMISPHERE. THE RESULTS OF THE OBSERVATIONS WILL BE MADE INTERNATIONALLY AVAILABLE AND WILL BE WHOLLY UNCLASSIFIED. (THE U.S. NAVAL OBSERVATORY PROVIDES ACCURATE TIME AND OTHER ASTRONOMICAL DATA WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL FOR SAFE NAVIGATION BOTH AT SEA AND IN THE AIR.)

"FOLLOWING SURVEYS IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE, BLACK BIRCH WAS FOUND TO BE THE PREFERRED SITE BECAUSE OF ITS LATITUDE (AS GREAT A DISTANCE AS

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O 090521Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5705

INFO COMNAVAFACENGCOM ALEXANDRIA VA IMMEDIATE

PACNAVAFACENGCOM PEARL HARBOR HI IMMEDIATE

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POSSIBLE FROM THE EQUATOR) AND ITS CLIMATE (MAXIMUM NO. OF CLEAR NIGHTS). AS PROPOSED BY THE NAVAL OBSERVATORY, THE FACILITY WOULD INCLUDE AN AUTOMATED "TRANSIT CIRCLE" TELESCOPE, A TWIN ASTROGRAPH TELESCOPE, AND FIVE SMALL BUILDINGS LOCATED ON APPROXIMATELY FIVE ACRES OF CROWN LAND ADJACENT TO AN EXISTING FACILITY OPERATED BY THE CARTER OBSERVATORY. LIAISON BETWEEN THE CARTER OBSERVATORY AND THE U.S. NAVAL OBSERVATORY ON THE "TRANSIT CIRCLE" PROGRAM HAS ALREADY COMMENCED AND

WILL CONTINUE THROUGH THE PROGRAM'S CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATIONAL PHASES.

"CONTRACTS HAVE NOW BEEN NEGOTIATED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE U. S. NAVAL OBSERVATORY WITH A NEW ZEALAND CONSULTANT ENGINEERING FIRM AND A FIRM OF SURVEYORS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UPON COMPLETION OF THE SITE SURVEY, AND WITH THE CONCURRENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF NEW ZEALAND, CONSTRUCTION WOULD BEGIN ABOUT NOVEMBER 1979 AND IS SCHEDULED TO BE COMPLETED ABOUT MAY 1980. NEW ZEALAND CONTRACTORS ARE EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COMPETITIVE BIDDING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT. THE FACILITY, WHEN OPERATIONAL, WILL BE MANNED BY AS MANY AS NINE CIVILIAN ASTRONOMERS."

6. FYI: THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STUDY AND STATEMENT WAS RAISED IN AN OFF-THE-CUFF WAY BY ONE OF THE SURVEY TEAM'S PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS. THIS IS AN ISSUE WHICH HAS NOT PREVIOUSLY BEEN RAISED BY THE GNZ WITH RESPECT TO THE BLACK BIRCH SITE. SURVEY TEAM AND EMBASSY WILL THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATE REQUIREMENTS IN THIS RESPECT AND WILL KEEP ADDRESSEES ADVISED. ONE OF EMBASSY'S CHIEF CONCERNS IS THAT WE NOT PLACE IN THE HANDS OF OPPOSITION ELEMENTS -- AND THERE WILL SURELY BE SOME -- ANY WEAPON WHICH CAN BE USED LATER ON TO DELAY CONSTRUCTION OR EVEN QUESTION THE LEGALITY OF THE FACILITY. THIS POINT IS RAISED AT THIS TIME MERELY TO ALERT ADDRESSEES OF THIS PLANNING ASPECT WHICH WILL NEED TO BE MORE FULLY DEVELOPED. END FYI. HEALY

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